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BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
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A SONG FOR DAVID, MY SON

With hands that trellis air
David plays a harp of sunstrings.
His luminous eyes
Read notes in dustmotes;
His delicate hair revolves
The light in soft volutes.

What ancient song,
What Israel lament
That whispered soft
From Saul's great tent
Flutes to his delicate ear?

In this pale shell
The blood still sings—
So far from sandy shore
Where Moses struck—
New testimony
To the old sweet moan.

Hard against his chest my ear
Can hear only the throb
Of my own heart, or its young echo,
While David hears the song
That I have lost,
And translates in the yellowed air—
The color of old manuscript—
The trembling song
From age to age.

Sy Kahn

TWO POEMS

Post-Mortem Freedom Song
(For poets who could not ignore)

With "underground" one's most precise
definement of one's rabbitwise
condition—presently or late—
how may one lift one's squeal in great-
phrased liltings, visioning such dark?

Suffectly scurry rhyming-park
beside stern-metred graveyard walls,
and even flourish banners, palls
to wrap spelled selves against "red" soil
when leaping optionally (mind—moil-
sharp instrument again—no lance)
which warren each may chased-there chance.

Ah, happy furless fish, we sing
while water fills these holes to bring
scanned foot-leap. Accent's bullets passed,
no metaphor's equivo-cast!
Not merely dampened, speedy-drowned . . .
and every ingress aptly found
holds *assurément* what we'd all
this time unvaguely feared: our call
to final anonymity—
our seepage-prospect, unity
with loam, enriched therewith by our
unwitting carcasses, to flower

into another spring upon
bright graves, within which we anon
lie not. We "safely" found which we
preferred, and dove to bliss quite free.

And who can argue now? No stone
is carven telling who'll atone
because we didn't *leap* that wall
and chisel boldly, disregarding all.

James Boyer May

The Abstract, Briefly Defended

A quibble could—and nicely, by
some nicely-nasty juggled word-
definements—so enwrap *abstract*
in gauzed semantic fluffiness,
that pages might be inky-spit-
ted eye-destroyers. But the word
the critics use is plainly vague
by comprehension—taking off
from rocky, red-hot spires to neu-
tral atmosphere, there hung in space,
condemned because intangible,
they cry.

Now, wait! They say they see
it soaring, feel its gassy draft . . .
and even angered by its hue,
they charge it's unspecific, when
it calls to mind all difference
amongst the buyers of escape.
Now, could it be the user had
in mind the same result? That word

comprising most meant best to him?
And do objectivists surpass
the inward-dreamers conjuring
without such color-taste-and-sound
exactitudes? And must the last
and only meaning always be
the shaft-sharp one *mot juste?* Or may
not tolerance concede both mul-
tiplex intentions and some joy
to those quick-bored by easy arrows?

James Boyer May

KNOCK, AND IT SHALL BE OPENED

When I went south the northbound cars, driven
By appearing men of faith who knew the worth
Of north, asked one question over and over,
"Wishing which wish?"
I was blessed
With time, knowing that those who asked were given,
Those who sought, found.
I headed north.
Which? Which wish?
I tried the east.
A lover
Of absolute directions, I drove west.

I am afraid it is rather late to switch
To diagonal routes,
wishing which wish,
which wish wishing.

Hollis Summers

PORTRAIT: A CONTEMPORARY

When mothers at last grown weary with cancer, die,
They bequeath to their sons prosecution of letters, written
From college *(Love, Son)*. Collecting in layers that lie
Like griefs heavy pressured, the notes beside them, chill
With circumscribed words, ridicule her will.

When you, a friend, wander dumbly into drawers
Alone at night, these will remain intractable
By previous definition, held exterior.
Your fingers will fumble desperately for a fault
In stratification so infractable.

After selling the house (the father hotels) and he moves
To apartmented transience, continuing beyond graduation
In this school, awaiting the Army
Or some worthwhile thing to do, it behooves
You to deplore his improbable sense of direction.

When unpaid bills and reminders of classes cut
Litter the desk top like shavings, you'll listen
To her recordings, among her furniture, moved,
And later at three descend in silence the stair
To the burner, with beer cans in a collection.

When stumbling on insecurity he will be caught
Between the sexes, you will love him piteously well.
Should you read someday of his death in the war
In Hungary, it will explain perhaps the fought
Imponderable thing that was hidden in his mother's will.

James Land Jones

FOUR POEMS

Totem

Some kind of swirl—and I was born,

Confederates among the animals
catching my loss in scales or fins
and starting with it up the path again;

A Jericho whistle through early mist—
my cousins were talking with the other quail,
hunting the perfect hedge to call.

In a pasture minute of any day
I will go like the drop of rain on a thorn.
Some animal will touch a paw with its tongue,

Some kind of swirl—and again I'll be born.

A Hudson River Vista

A pride of Mohawks, their scalps all whiskied,
leaped at their hour, dawn-light, to the carving.
By noon the farms were smoke.

No use to call this evil, nor yet fate:
a certain forest the Colonies tormented
matured and brought forth fruit.

Men on the Hudson, I have watched your rings
flash good and evil on the train to work,
and heard your papers rustling.

Each dawn the headlines whisper Mohawk names.

Long Distance

Sometimes when you watch the fire
ashes glow and gray
the way the sun turned cold on spires
in winter in the town back home
so far away.

Sometimes on the telephone
the one you hear goes far
and ghostly voices whisper in.
You think they are from other wires.
You think they are.

Deer Stolen

Deer have stood around our house
at night so still nobody knew,
and waited with ears baling air.
I hunt the still deer everywhere.

For what they heard and took away,
stepping through the chaparral,
was the sound of Then; now it's Now,
and those small deer far in the wild

Are whispers of our former life.
The last print of some small deer's foot
might hold the way, might be a start
that means in ways beyond our ken

Important things. I follow them
through all the hush of long ago
to listen for what small deer know.

William Stafford

THE EAGLES

Came the first, a great eagle with great wings,
Long wings streaked with colors and wide to wind,
Soaring, coasting, spiralling height of sky,
And exulting in his swift, fearless flight.
A lone contender of the sun, without
Equal or rival, he screamed his proud
Defiance at the earth beneath his feet,
Then horizoned out to the highest peak
And placed his nest among the stars, a king.

His might unchallenged, he cropped off the top
Of the tallest twig and carried it down
To a land of traffic, where it would be
A symbol among the lower and the weak
Of his great power, pledging to protect
Them with his wings, to comfort and defend
All within reach of his talon and beak,
His rule their only hope and guarantee
Against fellow creatures, their enemies.

Then boldly he took the most promising seed
And had it planted in a fertile field
Where it grew and became a worthy wood
Whose branches turned toward him because their
roots
Were under him—and the eagle's shadow
Was part of the trees, as gentle shadows
Gave way to struggling shoots and ambitious
Boughs, until they spread so thick, so lush,
And there were so many more birds to clutch

That a second great eagle with great wings
Appeared, with lust as strong and vision keen
As he who had fulfilled his dream too well.

And now the trees swayed, the branches trembled,
The woods shook as in a storm, birds and leaves
Fluttered in the darkening wake of siege,
While the roots twisted and turned, threatening
To rise and split the ground in two, if these,
Their masters, could not covenant a peace.

Long the eagles circled, pondering each
His own intentions and weighing his speed
Against the other's force, to make assault
Swift and sure and secure a victor's score;
But twinned as they were in fierceness and design,
The two took secret council: to unite
Their likenesses, that together they might
Set the land at ease and between them bind
Its blessings by this oath that both despised.

With banners raised, calmly their shadows merged
And they returned, brothers by blood and word
To all the small and humble birds they shared
For the common good. And now the roots veered
Their branches to the new allegiance, made
The soil drink from new streams, so that they gave
More and better fruit than ever before,
And the woods prospered in having two lords
Who sheathed their claws with cautious greed and
scorn.

Slowly they moved apart, making their truce
Extend as far as they could spy and swoop
On the first mouse to cross and scout the field
In the belly of a snake, sign and seal
Of eagle's war. When it came, both flew up,
Poised for the strike, the bloody kill, the skull
Of hated adversary—but neither one

Came down. Caught by invisible nets, they plunged
Into their own snares with their hearts unstrung.

Then the fowls of the heavens and the beasts
Of the earth gathered. What ruins were these
From which there was no deliverance or escape?
And they went out and scattered the remains
Toward all the winds, until the eagles' dust
Had drifted and settled, bringing green shrubs
To the desert, tall cedars to the hills,
Young meadows into clearings and a finch
To sing of other summers coming in.

Elizabeth Bartlett

THE ANNIVERSARY

It was five years ago tonight, she thought,
Standing outside the house that she had kept
In order since the death, that on that hill
I rose furious and fell sobbing, and heard
The bleating of a goat my virtuous grief
Had not kept from danger, that some demon

Had seen fit to hinder on my husband's hill,
That when I stared in the deep trench I thought

The poor beast dead, but it has been my grief
Since, limping to my hand, and what I've kept
Is more than goat-friend, or my husband's demon-
Passion to help all whose faint cries he'd heard,

And five years ago tonight came the demon
Who I thought then could not have known my grief,
Who so tended the goat, who may have heard
Some sign of my impatience, filled the hill
My husband loved so with sorrow for beast kept
Instead of shot, that then I had but one thought

Which was to voice in a harsh tone my grief,
And even before I, he on the hill
Seemed to know that grief was not my demon,
No, not of that kind, husband- or goat-thought,
So much as wonder, after all he'd heard,
Over how long the lie of love I'd kept

I'd kept as love itself, and what he heard
He was discreet about, even as a demon
Playing cat and mouse, by silence kept,
Until the goat's bleating stopped and grief
Turned to embarrassment in every thought,
And then, he stood facing me on the hill,

Telling me how a husband's friend had kept
Faith with the departed and all he'd heard
About his widow's beauty, whose main thought
Was needing a man to tend the goats, with demon-
Skill proving where we stood upon that hill
How well he knew my each way and true grief

Of all those hard-kept years, and on that hill
I heard rasp and sigh left me no room for grief
Or thought whether he was god, man, or demon . . .

David Galler

ANGER

Reifsnyder at seventy-three
still liked to cut up a slaughtered pig.
He had the knife sharp, and on a slope
where the land opened below the barn
he hung the carcass up in its shroud
fresh from the boiling water, and on the belly
he cut a thin red line. The dogs, though hungry,
backed away, knowing he would kick them,
but waited. They would get fed.
The men sat near, on the ground.
They watched this man chew his straw, wink,
and revolve the knife in his hand.

He steadied the heavy carcass
supported on the gallows wire
by the feet tendons in the *hesaholtz*
and there it hung, a corpse, white—
that dead-white look. Like others
he had had an only son.
A son means all to a farmer,
the fist of his life—his hope.
The farm boundaries licked across the neighbors'
for this one son to inherit.
The house was built large for him.
Now that the son was dead,
life, that *schwowa,* went on,
and one said nothing—nothing.
There was one Bowman, in Bally,
talked about a dead son—
all right for him, not for me.
Reifsnyder's son married a woman
a little older than he.
Had looks, yes. Brought money too.
Everything seemed as it should be.

They lived in Reifsnyder's house
as it had long been planned,
but the woman, from the first night on,
kept to her side of the bed—
so the son told it—was silent,
then went home to her folks.
Maybe what it was she needed
was a house of her own.
They arranged another house,
but, no, she would not—and would not talk.
Then my son going to his room,
staying by himself— The knife worked down.
The inward parts began to be exposed:
liver, heart, kidneys, lungs.
There is something dreamlike
in the colors of these organs.
Inward where all is protected,
where all floats in liquid,
there are colors unknown to the air—
and vivid—reds, *veiolich,*
hot lamps of grays and browns—
like dreams that, when colored at all,
are startling in their vividness.
He raised the bucket to these parts
and scraped all down.
To hang himself. To hang himself
for a woman. What is a woman?
Die Welt steht, what is a woman
to die for? He spat out the straw,
and continued to chew it in his mind.
Fool, what is it, what is it?
The next one is just as good.
We arranged for the other house.
We divided the beds, the bedclothes,
so they would go and then come back

later when your mother and I died,
later when the house was yours.
I put my pride down. What is it?
What is that stubborn *sehnsucht*
I could not unstick from your eyes?
Speak, you fool. Oh, fool, fool.
He had the bladder now in his hand,
the leathery sac like a balloon,
hot with the living urine.
To die. In a rage he squeezed it.
He pissed it out over the ground
in the pale, steaming stream
out of its natural organ.
Then he threw the sac and its attachments
to the dogs.
The carcass was empty.
All that remained was to split it,
and one man would carry half away
and another man the other half.
So nothing changed? Would he always
hate his son as he did now,
keeping his son alive in himself,
or would he at the end of his life
let his son die at last,
fixing a reasonable line
around his farm and his hurt,
and, so, get ease at last?

Millen Brand

CORA PUNCTUATED WITH STRAWBERRIES

Sandra and that boy that's going to get her in trouble
one of these days were out in the garden where anyone in
Mother's sickroom could see them out the upperleft corner of the
window sitting behind the garage feeding each other
blueberries and Cherry was helping with the dishes alone in the
kitchen and
um good strawberries if we did grow them just can't can without
popping one in every so often Henry was at it again in the
attic with that whatchamacallit of his when the Big
Bomb fell smack in the MacDonalds' yard you know over on
Elm and they got into Life and the papers and all all very
well but they might have been home when it hit and it would have
been a very different story for Lucy MacDonald then I'll tell
you you know they say it was right in the Geographic Center of the
country the Geographic
woody Center and you could hear it over here plain as day I thought the
elevator had blown up and I guess you read yourself the awful things it
would have done
aak you know there's an awful lot of woody strawberries this year they

say they only had the one and only would have needed
one well
I always knew we could beat the enemy they made
such
shoddy tricks and spring-toys and puzzles and fuses
and
things and besides, it wouldn't have been right.

George Starbuck

TO JOURNEY ALONE

Beloved, somewhere in this city
a Norseman has hung his cowbell.
I touch you
in starless night and in the preludes to days,
the piercing fragments of an accent,
gorse-gold haze over the hills of far away.

Mine were the calcite hands that set you free
in midnight sunlight above the paths of water-
pearl.
A wind sifted you through the outspread day
to lie upon the iron mountains of Helgeland,
adrift to fishing islands for time immemorial.
Was it this wind or another
that urged you to venture from the cove
which cuts this coast of low-ledged granite;
then moaned through our years for your return?

Marrow-deep I live your longing now.

Strangers shared moonfire
warming a sky
robed in eyelet over orange.
It ceramiced the sea
and all night we flew with it westward
to the city where you were bondman.

Over the Sound
with a sherbet sunrise melting
it was beneath us like a clutch of cricket baskets
poised on a finger of land.

"The wicker works ensnares a pantherama,"
you whispered once in a deaf one's ear,
"and engined mammoths churn this channel
round a Jurassic jungle."

I would go, beloved, fatigue-faint
to the ghosthold of our home . . .
Pterodactyl-planes were cruising,
the saurian subway stirred . . .
I tarried an endless time
and was poured from a fishbowl bus
into the salmon-run of commuter's rush.

Still you stood afar, a tympanum-ringing echo:
"The giant held a banana-moon
and stars of lemon-drop."

The lidless eyes of lighted rooms
and sliding serpent signs
defaced the cashmere cape that twilight draped
upon the avenues . . .

There was one resembling you
in the gray dust of laughter dancing
in the distances of his look—
A seldom-spoken man and softly then.
He heard a cricket chirp

above the human-motor current.
"Unless we see," another said . . .
Beneath a scaffold some tiles were moved
and insects fled their tunneled shelter.

"Man hears what he listens for."

He proved it so, as from his pocket
he brought forth a handful of change
and flung it like wheat to hens;
hearing the clink of the coins
rushing pedestrians paused.

O my dearest
above the city on the flume of evening
that moon was a tilted canoe—
spilled over me its memory-cargo of you.
The sudden infinity thawing
rolled wet from my face.

Edna K. Meudt

THE MANTIS MAN

"Look (gasp), from the flying saucer—can
It be, it is, it's Mantis Man!
Right at our door like a fantastic address,
He's eating an old lady like a Delicious
Apple; and in tow he's got Sharon,
And Marilyn Blumberg, and the annoying man
Who gabbed all the way downtown on the bus.
Call the Baltimore Sun, and say suburbia's
Been invaded from outer space; call the police,

Say the Mantis Man's devouring the Jews;
Call the governor, call out the militia—
Flamethrowers, grenades, and DDT
For the most bloodthirsty, most horrific,
Most phantasmagoric, most anti-Semitic,
Most anti-human creature of the imagination,
The twenty-foot, orthopterous Mantis Man!"
(End of scenario, end of scene!)

(Fade in Ed Murrow and tele-hum!)
"Out of a poster sky it came, as come
It would the scientists said who did not believe in
flame
Or ice but in a kind of superlice
That would eat us out of time and place.
It, in the ungrammar of Armageddon,
Arrived precisely at 6:30 PM,
DST, on a windless evening in chilly streets,
As Pop came home to the wife and kids.
For supper that night, for October sunset,
For cigarette, book, and TV—'It'.
Out of Pollock hazards of orbital dust,
It motivated its jet-propulsed
Spacetta, green arms reverenced to its zeroed
Job: take earth, take man, take thought.
Incidental means to a thumping success
Reached denouement in a Baltimore house."
(Fade voice, fade sound, fade Marvin S.!)

Marvin Solomon

THE IMPOSSIBLE MOUNTAIN

At verge of the pink woods
silvered by slender poplars
I lay me down to hide
amidst the fine green cones

lay me down on the warm earth
    crushing the long green grasses
earth-crust pushing and cracked with fears.

Small fall breezes, warm as the summer,
warn of the winter behind the pass
at verge of the pink wood, edge of the mountain,
the most impossible mountain ever heard.

    The mountain round and high and blue
    lipped with humbled clouds
    broken their prophet's veil, and torn
    by towering winds of ice.

The breezes scent it, slither and shake
the beneficent hum of elms, to strum
down, down down our living
    down to the probable earth—from
    up from high the impossible mountain
    mistress to sun alone, and yet
Who knows—who is master up on the sterile cliff?

I lay on the warm earth, crushing the grasses,
nibbling a fine green cone
at verge of the pink wood, after the marshes,
drying and soaking the sun's warm lashes,

watching the tamarack's gold spined filigree
tremble a queenly tread
through lazing sunlight and folding breezes
tainted with chill from the most improbable
impossible merge at the edge of the wood.

At twilight the night feeding deer came out
from the sheltering swamp to feed, to lick
crystals of stream and sea, long dead,
the essence of being, dried, and spread
in filtered cones of old root beds. They nibbled sprouts
of spruce and oak, and never felt my shallowed breath
nor stamped my presence on the ground, but fed
leisurely, as though no enemy watched them over-
head.

And more and more uneasy as I lay,
hidden, hiding, wishing the woods away,
the cones bittered, the grasses bit,
forgotten images flitted. Cedars creaked
and acorns hit me across the cheek.

The deer lapped daintily, almost safe
at the open salt lick their fathers found:
enlarging Epicycle of need, a region of pure
desire, the ground
humped and bent with old repressions.

The trees grew under the Old Wolf Tree—
old wolf, old Man with his high, wide spread

haunching over the small sparse pines,
sparing the sunlight as he would,
each conserving each, and none to spare—

And *where* is the open sacrifice?

When old Abraham marched to the mountain
to appease the possible wrath
the incredibly tall wall, and whatever reared beyond,
just any holocaust wouldn't have done:

He came through the pink wood
past the ghost fox's double den
where acorns fatten and fall and burst
to fill the black squirrel's cheeks

with never a glance he climbed
with Isaac, his only son,

and the does looked, cautious, sated with salt,
curious, and watched him halt
at the driest timbers to bind the likeliest bud
    subject to fears, insect desires,
    human derivatives and divinations,
    subject to passion and, of all things,
        tenderness

And would not any God at this
    blue flaming prospect
jealous but welcoming,
adoring and welcoming,
    at least, corrupt him?

Abraham slid Isaac over the green cones
bitterness rising

oil of the unripe seed as much a salve
as rarest unguent poured to heal, perhaps,
the mountain's massive steeped sterility.

Then
incendiary birds flew out of the thicket
their sparks unbound the boy
and do you remember, a ram
innocently by, sufficed?

And somewhere the land of the conquerors,
spell binders. There, only the blind (desperate)
lovers leap
Archeologists finding a skull
mark well the box which held a jewel.
Or
North where the giant oak
dangling with mistletoe
pearling in strange fecundity
squared into frames of flame
filled with living reference
raised a rash of anguish:
Let me climb the oak
wear the holy parasite
and burn with blessing.
Didn't the sun shine benign, the very next day,
Didn't he?

Our sons and daughters
We walked them through fire
diverting enchantments
the bruised reed become serpent,
. . . the honey bee hid . . .
to deliver to hands of despoilers

a time cast out of sight

Taste, savor well this wisdom
born in water welling over the salt sea.
Deer, stricken by instinct, find their answer
far from shores, in the sandy static brink of a wave.

On blotting paper lies the backward answer
answer before ever the question
never the voice of experience
never bearded advice
just the simple answer
backward

Carry the mirror to the blotter
there is no life in the mirror
there is no life in the answer
A moving finger wrote, the pen
flowed once, and nevermore again.

Could one properly begin
with questioning, before he wrote,
before the ink flowed backward
into the simple answer,
but it is always too late.

If it were always as easy
as a one times one,
and one the answer
(That terrible zero times one
do you remember
that answer?)

There are those who force a sort of peace,

a status quo,
and under huge meticulous mantles
nervously check their wrists for time.

Time?
I look and watch for slightest sign
the ineffable moment . . .
none, none to be done with,
never over
(Halls to the Sun still stand, hand carved,
and the mistletoe hung.)
And the blue rim of the mountain
strung horizoned sized to my lying-down eyes.

There is time
there is time
while white grapes turn
ruddy and heady for yeast asleep
ferment and bubble, sour skin
and a seasoned recipe yet unlearned
there is time

while acorns round and plump their caps
to clump on the needled ground
(nobody wants to share)
there is time

with many a den all cosied, set,
safely deep for storm and chill
granary, crib, complete with traps
poker faces and transient will
there is time

Just over the hill I could hide
Sand easy to burrow.
The land turtle lumbers by
furrowing tracks
he'll not use again

Sun finds easily every grain of salt,
can melt, globule a rock to vault.
Turtle, I could beg your back,
those layering years.

All the wisdom that the pack of deer contain
contains no resurrection theory I can use,

or ant, bee, thimbleberry!
What I lack
surfeits me, suffused
with its use undone,
abused,
stung to ivy rancid taint
to taunt me

There is time
is time

There is not time
There never was
The immediate perceptible precipice
looms eternal, obedient too
to whom?

Down through the hungering years
by disabled springs and the choked creek
in rude violation of sound, I come

the birds ominously dumb,
and all the fairest chosen

At verge
of the pink wood, under the oak
and under the wintering pine
when March fawns prance in innocence
only the perfect surviving
what can I find to offer? I desperately proffer it all
deciding
this time, pursuing time,
poor Abraham at best,
it's got to be what I want as much,
It has to be enough

Or it might not
set
the impossible mountain
at rest.

Sheila Pritchard

ODE ON S. NICHOLAS'S DAY

Tantus amor florum et generandi gloria mellis.
Verg. Geo. lib. 4

ReJoyce in the Pound

Come Parsons,
Come Leonard the Lyons,
  Spectator and Tatler,
Come Winchell:
O tell,
  Inspire my praise of the Statler
Hotel.

In the land of the cod, the steak, or the rattler,
Behold! a multitude of heavenly hostels, the Statler.
  Sunt gemini portae, upstairs and down,
  One of auto horn, one on the town.
  Both lead to the antiseptic hostile tower:
  Lasciat' ogni personality on entering this bower
  Of bliss, where no birds sing
  Nor breezes stir, nor curfews ring
  The Nell, nor fire to cover of coal or passion.
  Here's to love, that is, of fashion!

Hail the service, hail the ever-flowing fount!
Hail the escalator, hail th'expense account!
  The wishing well runneth over:
  Put on the dog, put out the Rover
  By gemini porters—they all look the same—
  And servitors are servidors,
  And Harry's not the Bailey's name,
  Though there's esprit with accent on the corps,
  And none is any man's fool,
  For tips give more than teaching school.

Hail the lacquered hair, the mink, the stole!

Hail the sanitizèd toilet bowl!
Buffer against the revolt of Ortega y Gasset
The sterile toilet seat at bottom's an asset.
All is calm, all is clean
Alf Laylah wa Laylah
Ou la la wei allala
Everyman's an auspicious king, every woman
a quean.
Efficiency's your hobby:
You wear your hearth on your lobby.

Hail the regal scuttling claws!
Who dares to beat a pitch?
Hail the bonded Santa Claus
With tolerable neural itch!

Hail the guilt-edged bond!
Hail the platinum, ave the blonde!

Welcome the fisher, the mixer, the cattler:
Serve them all with Ifrit and Jinn,
But tell, O tell us, Hotel Statler,
Is there room in the Inn?

Albert Howard Carter

MY AUNT TELLS A STORY

My aunt tells a story word of mouth; therefore
she wouldn't approve of my doing it this way.
At any given time, she would prefer
a small, select audience; thus I deny her.

In 1935 she was raising cotton; some would say
she raised a bit of Cain. My chore
is to tell about the Cain, but the cotton

is a necessary prop, if I've not forgotten.

And I haven't. She had forty acres of the stuff.
She ploughed it by herself. If that wasn't enough,
she chopped it alone and pulled out the Johnson grass
with her own hands. Forty acres, mind you.

Then one day as she chopped and pulled, a voice
said Catherine, Catherine, there is someone behind
you.
And she turned calmly and there in a mass
of sumac was a man, a man of all men choice.

My aunt, who I see I have neglected to say
was not until shortly thereafter my aunt at all,
dropped her hoe and went over to the grove
and spoke to this man. It was a hot day;

she didn't mind that he was naked. He was tall
and sunburned and he wanted to make love.
Which my aunt said it was too hot for, but if he'd
help her for a while and put on his clothes,

he could go home with her that night and she'd
see he got fed and after that, who knows?
So this sort of thing went on the rest of the year,
it being so agreeable to both;

and the next spring my aunt planted another field
in cotton, an idea to which my uncle was loath,
because by this time Aunt Catherine got a fear
she might be pregnant. It couldn't be helped nor
healed.

She surely was. Pregnant as the devil.
My common-law uncle departed for all points west.
My aunt's eyes wear a veil to ward off evil,
but of all my cousins, I like her bastard best.

Edsel Ford

TWO POEMS

Billy and the Once-Upon: A Cosmogony

Once upon a chance a technician
in charge of the giant telescope atop Mount Murgatroyd
profiting by the momentary inattention of his employer
filched an infinitesimal fragment of fossilized light
shed by a long so many light-years dead
star
and took it home for his infant son to play with.

Once upon a beach four virgin sirens
watched a racoon playing in the moonlight.
Once upon a time-beam an improbable angel
twanged to its surprise a mating call
that brought all the porpoises for meridians around
turning phosphorescent flip-flops
out of the brittle sea. The shattering panes
of brine set up vibrations in the cradle
which in turn
crystallized the stolen light into a spar
of purest tourmaline. The infant howled:
The racoon paused in its play and scurried for cover:
the virgin sirens uttered embarrassed titters
and screened their pudicities with tremulous fingers:
a walrus raised its mustached head and roared:
the angel hurriedly unstrung the time-beam
and smuggled it into its brassière:
all science was discarded and had to be re-invented
by nine old nunces mumbling night and day

for as many nautical years: the porpoises
interrupted their cartwheels and trooped
sheepishly back to the sea casting abashed
glances over their shoulders at the still
virgin sirens. The thievish technician
was canonized: the baby grew up to be illegitimate,
and the innocent cause of it all,
the gigantic telescope atop Mount Murgatroyd,
revealed to be a phallic symbol, was banned
from polite conversation forever and ever
and a long drear winter's day.

Fragment of a Travelog

The day I left Arizona it was
126 in the if-there-had-been shade
Which, speaking of hot climates, brings me
—with fifteen years interim—
to North Africa, specifically Algiers
    and Algiers, as far as I'm concerned,
Sidi Benny Bouffetout
can *have.*
        Tunis is all right in a Tunisian sort of way
and I always meant to get to Marrakech,
but Algiers, unless you chance to like
siroccos and bougainvilleas . . .
        Yet, wait, there *was* that girl,
the waitress at our mess—Li'l Booful,
known for short as the
Hydrophobia Doll
for how she had us frothing at the mouth—
and it wasn't just that in those days Algiers
had fewer girls per male

than there are horned toads in the State of Maine—
oh no! that girl-chile was set up
with so much of the most of everything
that the morning she came to work
in a fluffy pink sweater
the young adjutant dropped a cup of
scalding coffee in his lap
and it might as well have been frostbite . . .
Everything—and when she found herself a
pair
of nylons instead of cotton ones she *had* been wear-
ing,
a little *more* than everything
AND
those
Great Big Innocent
(Oh, hombre, were they
Innocent!)
EYES
thrown in.
And when she moved about between the tables
all that
Everything about her
bounced:
It was like early Spring
fresh from the Fôret de Chantilly
coming around a corner at full tilt
with its arms full of daffodils.
And when she
leaned over your shoulder
to put more butter on the table or replace
an empty ketchup bottle,
minutes later you found yourself still
trying to eat with the wrong end of your fork.
The mess fund piled up profits all that month
with most of us too ogle-eyed to eat.

Until one day a visiting
one-star general
took in the situation at one glance
and Li'l Booful at another
and the next we heard
she was up at Caserta in a sort of WAC
uniform as his non-
typing, non-English-speaking secretary.

Also there was the day
when all the Viennese
6 foot 4 of Baron von Raubitz,
knees crouched up to his ears
like an overgrown grasshopper
behind the wheel of the jeep
("In Vienna Mercedes,
Isotta, Daimler have I owned")
insisted on driving it and crashed
into a British staff car.
The British sergeant got out
and said respectfully,
"Sir, may I see your particulars?"
"My *what?*" says Raubitz. "*What* does he want to see?"
"Your particulars," I translated
and climbed out of the jeep and walked away.

I never saw *him* again either
but missed him much less
than Li'l Booful,
Our Hydrophobia Doll.

No, on the whole Algiers could have been worse.

Ramon Guthrie

THE BEANSTALK

He was small in voice
small
yet large in love wandering
in poverty and a wealth of wonder.
But his mother
walked among the shadows
and was surrounded by screams
and she wiped her hands
on her apron
wet with a bloody world.
Vanity
dressed like a city
pitted the forest
the owl looked out from darkness
the dotted fawn avoided streets
leaves
curled in protection of trees
and woods were large
or small.

And she said wiping her hands
you must not be small
courage is a voice
that climbs walls and descends
into the market
pitted with vanity.
O she said you are too little
like a grain of sand you are
light reflecting
tiny
and giant footsteps walk
over the morning over
throwing shadows

and fear
hides its voice in the woods
large or small.

And she wrapped her shawl
about her fear
warning trees
and sent him out in trade
shadowed by a milk-white cow
among the trees
reaching higher than clouds
up out of darkness
trembling tops
through the woods
with wonder small or large
and a voice seeking
courage
and a dotted fawn.

Till he met a man
wrinkled
whose face was round and wise
whose eyes were easy
who said there is no city
but thickness like
stone
harder than night and heavy
and the man was round and mild.
He said you cannot buy courage
nor trade it for wonder
and loved the milk-white cow
patience and slow.
He said here is magic for love
and a heart taller than trees
and I take the cow
for its milk-white experience.

And the boy was large in wonder
large
like the trembling tops
at the edge of clouds.

He found her wrapped in fear
where was the city
the trade its meaning lost
in a green experiment a dream
detoured
among the trees
whose voice
had said there is but stone
that we live in magic live
alone with wonder wandering.
And she sent him to bed
with her tears wrapped over
his voice.
The night was soft
because the night was magic
and reached out from its womb
with growth higher than
trembling tops.

And he woke to a climbing sense
of wonder up up
higher
reaching the clouds and castles
where a giant walked over
over morning
throwing shadows
and the giant sat in the center
of largeness
with giant hands
counting gold with a bold laugh
and a bolder greed counting

from one bag to the next counting
with thick fingers
                and large.
Then in the drowsy clouds snored
like a thick bag a heavy wind
thick with counting
                the boy tip
toeing on the trembling tops
with golden wonder and small
his voice quiet with courage.

And the giant woke
                smelling
the blood of the world thick
with counting and anger running
where the boy was wrapped
                fear
fear like a brooding growth
excited the chase enveloping
love lost among trembling tops
                descending
into the world suspicion
cutting the stalk higher once
than clouds
                somewhere a giant
licking his shadow and below
down down
                lower
                surrounded
by fears large or small.

She wrapped him in pride
and counted their money scheming
the notions of the happy world
where the voice was courage
and the stone was thick and cold.

She said O there are places
for little boys
large in wonder
but who will go to the city
trade on fear escape the dark
who will buy wisdom
trembling woods
and hold the screams in a bag.

Yet he was small
smaller
than wonder.

Henry Birnbaum

YUGOSLAV CEMETERY
Jackson, California

At Gettysburg full anonymity:
Number for him whose name is past recall;
The marker dwindles, and the turf appears
Scant for a soldier's wear. (Can this be all?)

But here each granite bears a photograph:
From window-frame a personality,
Miniature of wraith, is gazing out,
Rain on the cheek in wistful parody.

Slavic inscription cannot hide this pair,
Wholly themselves, too young for such a bed;
Miner who died of silicosis; wife
Thin-faced and dark, with braids about her head.

Quietly as their neighbors they persist,
Preserve their essence, hint their special pain;
We are intruding on their privacy,
These large-eyed mournful lovers in the rain.

Celeste Turner Wright

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